

Seattle offers more than just urban adventures

by Reid Tuvim, Updated: August 15, 2019- 12:01 AM



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You've watched the fish mongers at [Pike Place Market](#). And ridden the monorail to the [Space Needle](#) (and the [Chihuly Garden and Glass museum](#) and the [Museum of Pop Culture](#)).

[Seattle](#) offers plenty of other places to see and things to do, but if you have a free day and want more than an urban adventure, start with facing south and seeing whether the mountain is out.

That would be Mount Rainier, an active volcano that's more than 14,000 feet above sea level and the centerpiece of one of three nearby national parks, along with Olympic (to the west) and North Cascades (north). If you don't have a car, tour operators can be option.

For a shorter excursion or for the carless or for avoiding the crowded parks on a weekend, there are ferry boats to Bainbridge Island or Bremerton.



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In Seattle, ferries travel to Bainbridge Island and Bremerton from the Colman Dock.

Ferry destinations. Bainbridge is 35 minutes away and Bremerton an hour across Puget Sound, leaving from the Colman Dock on the waterfront. On a sunny day, try the outside deck on the ferries, at least for a few minutes, even on a cold day.

The village on Bainbridge has shops, galleries, restaurants, and an art museum; the gardens and trails of Bloedel Reserve are accessible by public transportation.

Bremerton is a Navy town, home since about 1900 to what is now the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and Naval Base Kitsap (and several mothballed ships, including the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk); near the ferry terminal in opposite directions are the Puget Sound Navy Museum and the USS Turner Joy battleship museum. Not far is the top-flight public Gold Mountain Golf Club, which hosted the USGA Public Links Championship in 2006.

Mount Rainier. The Nisqually entrance (Longmire Museum and Henry Jackson visitor center) is about 90 miles and 2 hours south of Seattle on mostly state roads. There are several trailheads near the visitor center, ranging in length and difficulty of climb. Remember that you are already at an elevation of 5,400 feet — the first hundred yards can be a killer — and that weather can change quickly. Or just sit with a picnic lunch overlooking Reflection Lakes. Admission is \$30 per vehicle.



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The beach below Kalaloch Lodge on the Pacific coast in Olympic National Park has thousands of bleached-white logs strewn on the sand.

Olympic. The main entrance in Port Angeles and the Hurricane Ridge visitor center are about 3 hours from Seattle — either by first taking the ferry to Bainbridge or by driving south to Tacoma and then north to get around Puget Sound. (Fun fact: The original bridge over the Tacoma Narrows was nicknamed [Galloping Gertie](#); check out the videos on youtube to see why.) The park is vast, with entrances in several places, to reach campgrounds, trailheads, waterfalls, and hot springs. These peaks are not much higher than the starting point for hikes at Mount Rainer, so the walking at Hurricane Ridge is less strenuous and the flowers more vibrant. Admission is \$30 per vehicle.

If you have more than a day, continue driving on U.S. Route 101 from Port Angeles and past Lake Crescent, where you'll come to the Sol Duc Hot Springs, the Hoh Rain Forest, and the Pacific Ocean, including at the Kalaloch Lodge, where you'll find what might be the most unique beach you'll ever see, with thousands of bleached-white logs strewn on the sand.



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In North Cascades National Park near Seattle, the Skagit River is green because of glacier water.

North Cascades. The drive time to the visitor center is 2½ hours away and you can easily continue the loop through the area outside the park back to Interstate 5, past small towns and U-pick farms. The streams are green — not with algae but with glacier water. There is no admission fee to this park.

If you've come this far, the ferry that leaves from Anacortes and circles through the San Juan Islands is another option. (Ferries on this route have varied schedules and stops on the different islands; a trip can take several hours.)